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Mr. G. Robert Blakey
Chief Counsel and Director
Select Committee on Assassinations
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Blakely:

The enclosed newspaper story is forwarded for your information.

Sincerely,

(S/

S. D. Breckinridge
Principal Coordinator HSCA

Enclosure

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Assassination Probes: More Show Than Tell

By DANIEL SCHORR

VIEWPOINT PAGE

ASSASSINATIONS anybody? The game has long since lost its morbid fascination for most Americans, but here comes the all-star investigative playoff on President Kennedy and the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.

On Capitol Hill, whatever goes up in a resolution must come down in hearings. In September 1976 the House ordered an investigation of possible assassination conspiracies. Two years, $5 million, 1,500 interviews, and five internal donnybrooks later, the House Select Committee is planning to tell what it has found out in a month-long series of hearings, offered as a television spectacular to start in mid-August, when Congress leaves town.

Over the wall of secrecy, intended to maintain suspense, there wafts information indicating that the committee may be building to a letdown. The conspiracy buffs of the grassy knolls and the stop-action films will be disappointed. What the committee has been able to prove is largely unsensational, and what is sensational it has been largely unable to prove.

WHEN all the medical and ballistic evidence has been laid out through witnesses and exhibits, it should be more certain than it ever was that the triggers were pulled by Lee Harvey Oswald and James Earl Ray — just as officially established. Perhaps the most interesting development is an indication that Ray acted not out of any personal hatred for Dr. King, but as a hired gun for certain Southern racists whose names are now apparently known.

Oswald's motives remain as clouded as they ever were. The committee has unearthed evidence of multiple covers and deceptions by Moscow, by Havana, and by American intelligence agencies, but without being able to establish that anything more sinister was being covered up than their efforts to extricate themselves from implication in the assassination mess.

For example, the committee has new evidence that the KGB maintained intensive surveillance of Oswald while he lived in Minsk. This conflicts with the testimony of the defected KGB officer, Yuri Nosenko, that the Soviet security organization stayed completely clear of him. (Nosenko, with a new identity, has agreed to testify in public only if he is not seen.) To clear up the KGB connection, the committee asked the cooperation of the Soviet Embassy, which, in effect, told it to get lost.

BUT even if the KGB did maintain surveillance over Oswald, what would that prove, other than that he wasn't trusted? (Nosenko said that Oswald was, for a while, suspected of being a CIA agent.)

The committee believes it got a runaround from Fidel Castro and other Cuban officials. Castro denied that he knew of a specific CIA plot against him involving one of his lieutenants when he warned, in September 1963, of reprisals against American leaders. Castro also indicated to the committee that Oswald was treated as a nut when he came to the Cuban Embassy in Mexico City later that month. Manuel Asque, the consul who talked to Oswald, was not even sure any more that it was Oswald he dealt with.

But the committee has evidence that Oswald not only visited the embassy, but, after hours, dated Silvia Duran, Asque's assistant, and had contacts with other pro-Castro Cubans in Mexico.

The House committee has gone deeply into the FBI-CIA manipulation of the Warren Commission. A key witness is expected to be the commission's general counsel, J. Lee Rankin, reportedly shocked at the deceptions practiced by Government agencies. Another scheduled witness is ex-President Gerald Ford, a member of the Warren Commission, who, according to documents on file, kept the FBI informed about the secret proceedings.

Ex-CIA Director Richard Helms is negotiating through lawyer Edward Bennett Williams on whether he will testify. He helped to steer the Warren Commission away from the anti-Castro plots. Former Counter-Intelligence chief James Angleton, who coordinated the CIA's part of the Warren investigation, is on the witness list.

The House committee will be able to document shocking manipulation of the Warren Commission by the FBI and CIA, but it falls far short of showing a conspiracy to assassinate the President.

The committee has new links to organized crime by Jack Ruby, the cafe owner who killed Oswald. Mafia barons Johnny Masiello and Santos Trafficante figure in the torturous documentation. But Ruby's unwholesome connections do not add up to Mafia involvement in a conspiracy to kill the President.

Even without Mafia figures — who cannot be induced to testify — it should be a great show. The House committee is following the Hollywood dictum that strong casting can sometimes compensate for a weak plot.

Perhaps a written report would have sufficed to present the slim pickings, but then, since everything about this grim era has been theatrical, why not a theatrical last chapter — if only it is the last chapter?

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